

Resistance grows to racist Arizona law

Youth, immigrants, Indigenous lead marches, sit-ins, boycotts

Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Ariz.

Momentum is growing for the national march to stop SB 1070 to be held May 29 in Phoenix. The march will demand the repeal of SB 1070, Arizona’s “Show me your papers” law, and an end to racist immigrant-bashing and the blaming of immigrants for economic and social problems which in reality result from the capitalist economic crisis.

The march to the state Capitol and rally will be followed up on May 30 with community forums and strategy sessions on building a fightback movement against the racist offensive. In the wake of Arizona’s SB 1070, at least 10 other states are now poised to introduce similar laws.

SB 1070’s passage by the state Legislature in late April unleashed an endless storm of protest and resistance. The “Boycott Arizona!” campaign continues to grow and the Arizona bosses have already felt the impact. Gov. Jan Brewer is scrambling to “change Arizona’s image” and has created a task force charged with responding to the boycott. (azcentral.com, May 13)

The Arizona Diamondbacks, whose owners are major contributors to the coffers of those who pushed this law, are met with protests in every city they visit. Intense pressure continues to mount as demands are being made on Major League baseball to move the 2011 All-Star game out of Phoenix.

In the streets of Tucson protests continue. With the passage of anti-ethnic studies law HB 2281, student protesters continue to hold demonstrations and sit-ins demanding the right to learn their own history. On May 17 a group of openly undocumented students staged a sit-in at Sen. John McCain’s office to demand passage of the DREAM Act, a stalled congressional proposal that would offer legalization for some undocumented youth.

The students defiantly announced their status as undocumented and refused to leave McCain’s office until he pushed for passage of the DREAM Act. The students were arrested and risk deportation, but their action sparked similar actions by students in California, New York and other places.

On May 21, Indigenous activists from the Tohono O’odham Nation occupied the Tucson Border Patrol headquarters located on the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The activists chained themselves to structures in the Border Patrol office and disrupted operations there as they brought attention to the continuing war against Native peoples and the disregard for national sover-

eignty and Indigenous culture being waged by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The Tohono O’odham Nation is located in southern Arizona and extends into Mexico. For centuries the O’odham people have lived on and walked this land, long before there even was a U.S. or Mexico or a border of any type. DHS decided to extend the border wall separating Mexico from the U.S. through O’odham land, effectively cutting the nation in half. Additionally, the three roads on the U.S. side that provide access to the nation all have checkpoints and federal agents swarm the area. The militarization of Indigenous lands and the intrusion and harassment by federal agents has become intolerable.

Courageous actions like these are going to continue. Calls for “Freedom Summer Arizona” are attracting sup-

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port as activists across the country plot out a strategy for galvanizing all those affected and their supporters into a unified, militant movement that can defeat SB 1070 and the entire racist, anti-immigrant, right-wing agenda which produced SB 1070.

Teitelbaum is a coordinator of the Tucson May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights.

Native activists in Arizona occupy border patrol

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After killing of 7-year-old Aiyana Jones Repression, cutbacks wrack Detroit

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Seven-year-old Aiyana Jones, who was killed by a Detroit police special unit team that raided her home on May 16, was eulogized on May 22 at Second Ebenezer Church on the city’s east side. The city remains shocked and angered over the shooting and subsequent efforts by Mayor Dave Bing’s administration and the police to shift responsibility for the unprovoked killing to the recent rash in violence that has hit Detroit.

Mayor Bing and Police Chief Warren Evans, who were both criticized by the corporate-owned media for not responding quickly to the death of Aiyana Jones, have urged the public not to “reach conclusions” about the killing until all the facts are available. The mayor then accused attorney Geoffrey Fieger, who is representing the family of Aiyana Jones in two civil lawsuits that were filed just a few days after her death, of only being concerned about money and not about revealing what really happened at the home where the deadly police raid occurred.

With the Detroit police facing intense criticism and scrutiny, the administration and Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy have turned over the investigation into the killing of Aiyana Jones to the Michigan State Police. On May 20 state police showed up at the Jones’ family home seeking to search the premises for evidence related to the raid on May 16.

When the family refused to cooperate and allow the state cops to enter the home, they returned with a search warrant and a locksmith and proceeded to comb the residence for clues related to the killing of Aiyana. This was tantamount to a second raid and raised tensions even further between the community and the law enforcement agencies.

When it was announced that the Rev. Al Sharpton of New York would deliver the eulogy at the memorial service for Aiyana, Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox, who is a Republican candidate for governor, launched an attack and asked rhetorically, “Where was [Sharpton] last week when Detroit police officer Brian Huff was killed?” Huff was killed on May 3 when police raided a vacant home in the same neighborhood where Jones’ home is located.

Four other officers were wounded in the May 3 shooting along with a suspect, Jason Gibson, 25. Gibson, who has been charged in the shooting of the police officers, had a preliminary examination on murder and assault charges on May 24.

In response to the attack by Cox on Sharpton, the Rev. Horace Sheffield III, president of the Michigan chapter of the National Action Network, headed by Sharpton, stated, “I think it’s disturbing, disgusting and unacceptable for [Cox] to forsake his law enforcement role for his public pandering trying to get elected to another office role.” (Detroit Free Press, May 21)

In fact, the entire apparatus of the power structure including the city administration, the police, the prosecutor’s office, the state police, the attorney general and the governor have been hostile and defensive in regard to criticism surrounding the raid and the subsequent investigation into the death of Aiyana Jones.

A corporate-oriented consulting firm has questioned the city administration’s handling of the political situation surrounding the killing of Jones. According to the Los Angeles-based Bernstein Crisis Management Inc.:



Aiyana Jones.

“You can’t hide behind a press release. In a case like this one, lawyers will restrict what you can say, but that doesn’t stop you from doing the right thing by making a verbal statement, and reaching out to the family.”

Cora Mitchell, whose son was killed in April 2009 by the neighboring suburban Warren police, said the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality was doing the job of the city administration by working with the Jones’ family. “Why is Ron Scott [of DCAPB] here doing Warren Evans’ job? He should be here. Mayor Bing should be here. They should be apologizing to this family.” (Detroit News, May 19)

U.S. Rep. John Conyers from Detroit has requested that the Justice Department conduct an investigation into the killing of Aiyana Jones. Conyers said, “It is imperative that we take all possible steps to calm the situation, reassure the community that their safety is a national priority, and lessen the chance of future bloodshed.” (Mlive.com, May 21)

Nonetheless, Gov. Jennifer Granholm repudiated Conyers’ call by saying that the state police are more than qualified to handle the present situation. Granholm claimed, “Clearly an investigation could reveal changes that need to be made to ensure it never happens again, and that’s what the Michigan State Police are going to undertake.”

Cops rewarded

Just two days after the raid that resulted in the death of Aiyana Jones, the Detroit City Council voted 5-3, with one abstention, to adopt a new ordinance allowing cops to work additional jobs providing security to private businesses. This ordinance was passed despite warnings from the DCAPB that such a measure would raise the level of legal claims against the city government, which would be financially responsible in the event that lawsuits charging police misconduct, brutality and wrongful deaths were settled against the administration.

At a City Council public hearing on May 18 where the ordinance was passed, the bulk of the discussion prior to the vote was conducted by top police officials and council members, two of whom were former law enforcement officials. When the DCAPB spoke during the public comment section, each member was given only one minute to address the council on their opposition to the ordinance.

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‘Capitalism is killing us’

U.S. Social Forum meets in Detroit June 22-26

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

Momentum is growing internationally for the United States Social Forum to be held June 22-26 in Detroit. Tens of thousands of progressive activists are expected to attend.

According to the USSF website, the days-long event is a movement-building process. “It is not a conference but it is a space to come up with the peoples’ solutions to the economic and ecological crisis. The USSF is [an] important step in our struggle to build a powerful multi-racial, multi-sectoral, inter-generational, diverse, inclusive, internationalist movement that transforms this country and changes history.” (www.ussf2010.org)

Adele Nieves, communications coordinator for the USSF, told Workers World that over 1,000 workshops are scheduled and numerous demonstrations are being planned. Cultural contributions will be a central focus, with artists such as Dead Prez scheduled to perform. There will also be a tent city, tables for literature, grassroots food vendors, people’s movement assemblies and much more, including various art venues where progressive and revolutionary artists such as Antonio Guerrero of the Cuban Five will have their work displayed. The opening march on June 22 will have organizational contingents from all over the world.

The USSF grew out of the World Social Forum; the first USSF was held in Atlanta in 2007. Detroit was chosen as the site for the 2010 USSF because it is considered ground zero of the current capitalist economic crisis with record levels of foreclosures, evictions, utility shutoffs, unemployment and police terror. Detroit also has a long history of progressive and revolutionary struggle, which the organizations participating in the USSF are intent on building on to bring a better world into birth.

A wide range of labor-focused groups, including unions, coalitions, federations and workers’ centers such as the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, the Restaurant Opportunities Center, AFSCME Council 25, UAW Region 1A and South Eastern Michigan Jobs With Justice, have been working for months to build labor’s presence at the USSF. Approximately 70 labor-themed workshops on a wide variety of topics will be held, and labor will have a large presence at the opening march on June 22.

Focus on struggle, solidarity

“It’s impressive how many unions have picked up on the activities at the USSF. Because of the economic and social crisis we’re in it’s important that labor step up and fight back. Being part of mass movements is a better strategy for labor than simply relying on politicians. Right now jobs and unemployment are critical to what’s going on and will be a major focus of labor at the USSF. Labor needs to push hard on elected officials to create more jobs,” said Reggie McGhee, USSF Detroit Labor Committee co-chair.

The Labor Committee will be joining the USSF’s Faith and Spirituality Committee and the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs for a protest at Chase Bank on June 25 in downtown Detroit. Chase is being targeted for its funding of R.J. Reynolds through loans and other means. Reynolds is currently waging war on the Farm Labor Organizing Committee because of its attempt to unionize tobacco workers in North Carolina. Another focus of the Chase protest is to demand that the bank agree to a two-year moratorium on all mortgage foreclosures.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice and the Bail Out the People Movement are also sponsoring fightback workshops during the USSF.

Youth and students are a central component of the USSF and many of their organizations will be participating. One

such group is the revolutionary, socialist-oriented Fight Imperialism, Stand Together or FIST. (See fistyouth.wordpress.com.)

“FIST will be co-hosting a workshop along with the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal on building a new youth organization in defense of Mumia. An entire decade of youth has grown up without mass consciousness about the implications of Mumia’s case, and we are organizing to counteract that and expose the roots of racism, the role of the police, police brutality and repression of groups fighting for national liberation,” Dante Strobino, a FIST leader from North Carolina, told Workers World.

FIST will also be working with many of the organizers who planned the successful March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Public Education to host a workshop for another national day of action to be held tentatively on Oct. 7 and to intensify student resistance to budget cuts and the capitalist crisis.

Raising the banner of socialism

Added Strobino: “We see the USSF as a crucial moment to meet young people in motion and introduce them to socialism and to raise fundamental questions that challenge the entire foundation of our current capitalist system that has wrecked so many people’s lives. Detroit is the perfect place to do that with the destructive nature of capitalism exposed before everyone’s eyes: abandoned facto-

ries and mass unemployment, empty lots and no grocery stores near many neighborhoods while people starve, vacant and foreclosed homes while people are living in the streets, schools being closed and underfunded as students struggle to get a quality education. All these contradictions provide a ripe situation and point to socialism as the real way forward.”

Workers World Party will also be conducting a workshop and joining in demonstrations at the USSF.

“Workers World Party will be sharing the expertise of our members from around the country in fighting foreclosures, budget cuts, racism and war, and urging others to join us in the fight for a socialist future, which is the only solution to all the deep problems we face. Everyone knows that capitalism is killing us. We need to unite the working class and oppressed to overthrow it and replace it with a system that’s about people’s needs, not profits for the rich,” said Kris Hamel of WWP’s Detroit branch.

Detroit FIST, MECAWI, Moratorium NOW! and Workers World Party will have an open office for activists June 21-26 at 5920 Second Avenue in Detroit from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. USSF participants are invited to drop by for an evening coffee house, political discussion, cultural events and more. Visit www.moratorium-mi.org or call 313-887-4344.

For more information on the USSF, go to www.ussf2010.org or call toll free: 1-877-515-8773. □

Repression, cutbacks wrack Detroit

Continued from page 2

One argument advanced by the DCAPB was to point out that typically civil servants are not allowed to hold secondary jobs or operate private businesses while employed by the City of Detroit. Also most workers have had overtime cut even though there is a backlog of tasks needed to provide adequate city services.

At the same time, nonunion employees have had 10-percent wage cuts imposed on them while unionized workers have been fighting the same pay reductions through demonstrations and court actions. In addition, hundreds of city workers have been laid off due to cuts ostensibly designed to trim the city’s purported

\$316 million budget deficit.

In the initial budget proposal submitted by Mayor Bing, some \$101 million in cuts had been requested. These cuts would bring about further layoffs and reduction in city services.

However, one day after the City Council voted to grant secondary employment to cops, another \$31.8 million in cuts were placed in the budget by the same legislative body. These cuts would take place even within the police department, which has by far the largest allocation of city funds. Approximately 42 percent of the city budget goes to the police department.

In the days following these developments, the repressive actions of law en-

forcement have continued. On May 21, a state police officer shot and wounded a man on the city’s east side after a high-speed chase through a residential area. According to the Detroit News, “More than 30 officers, including members of Detroit’s gang squad, and at least a dozen police vehicles converged on the scene of the shooting.” (May 22)

Repression continues

This is in the same area where young Aiyana Jones was killed on May 16. The shooting of the young man took place after he had exited the vehicle that had crashed into a large tree.

More than 100 people from the community came out into the streets and protested the police actions. A neighborhood leader was taken into custody after objecting to the shooting and the reported jovial atmosphere among the police after the incident.

At least two area ministers were asked by Detroit Police Chief Evans to enter the neighborhood to calm down the crowd because of fears of possible civil unrest.

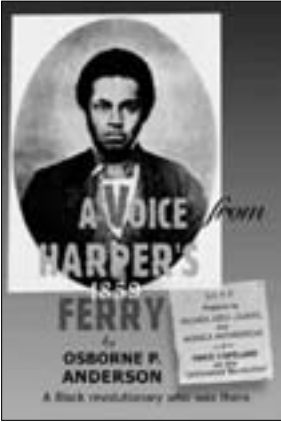
On May 23, the DCAPB held a community meeting at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. The DCAPB announced that it would step up its activities aimed at ending police brutality by calling for a mass demonstration on May 27 outside the Board of Police Commissioners meeting held at police headquarters.

The DCAPB is calling for justice in the police killing of Aiyana Jones and the immediate compliance and enforcement of the federal consent decrees involving police misconduct and brutality. □

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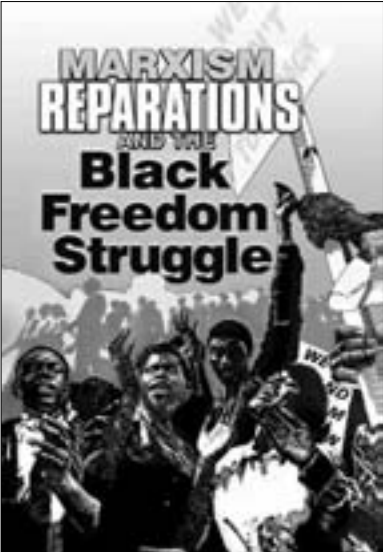
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Two choices for UAW — class struggle or suicide

Profits whet appetite for lower wages

By Martha Grevatt

It was front-page news. General Motors, for the first time in three years, posted a profit — and no small profit. In January, February and March combined GM raked in \$865 million.

Media analysts are quick to cite the drop in interest payments to GM’s lenders. Since cleaning out much of its debt in a government-orchestrated “quick rinse” bankruptcy, the company’s quarterly interest obligation has fallen from \$1.2 billion to \$337 million.

You would think this was the prime reason for GM’s speedy turnaround. No mention is made of the huge concessions — made while labor productivity soared and GM closed plants and cut the workforce by more than half — from the United Auto Workers. Yet it is by driving down the cost of labor power that profits — including the segment gobbled up by the banks and other bondholders — are increased.

GM cried poverty in 2005 and again in 2007, and during last year’s Chapter 13 bankruptcy threatened Chapter 7 liquidation. Each time, GM was able to squeeze huge wage and benefit cuts from UAW workers. Break time was shortened and a paid holiday was taken away. The give-backs, especially the most recent contract modifications, represent a huge transfer of wealth from labor to capital.

Similar contract changes were obtained during the Chrysler bankruptcy, which was portrayed as a dress rehearsal for GM. They went beyond concessions at Ford, which did not undergo bankruptcy. Last fall workers at Ford voted down the GM/Chrysler pattern, which took away the right to strike when the current contract expires in 2011, by a 4-to-1 margin.

UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and Vice President for Ford Bob King pitched the concessions as necessary to make Ford competitive. The day after the “no” vote,

Ford reported a third-quarter profit of more than \$1 billion. The company’s profits for 2009 came to \$2.7 billion and were \$2.1 billion for the first quarter this year.

Even Chrysler has improved its cash position dramatically, posting marginal first-quarter losses, and then only after taxes and interest payments were deducted from “operating profit.”

Prior to GM’s announcement, former White House “car czar” Stephen Rattner hinted that GM would have positive news. Rattner hailed the work of the Auto Task Force in crafting the deal that allowed auto companies to reap profits when the seasonally adjusted annualized rate of car sales hovers around just 10 million per year — compared to over 16 million before the recession. Before, the decrease in sales income and increase in cash incentives generated a negative cash flow.

This capitalist milestone was only reached by paying workers less while increasing the hours of work.

It should be expected that the UAW would insist, at a minimum, on getting back everything workers gave up prior to the GM and Chrysler bankruptcy. “When there’s equality of sacrifice, there’s got to be equality of gain,” stressed Bob King, who is expected to replace Gettelfinger at the UAW convention in June. “We just want to make sure when things turn around we share in the upside,” he said during a speech to executives and analysts. (New York Times, May 12)

There is no “equality of sacrifice” under capitalism. Over the past three decades autoworkers have made concessions in every single contract. Yet even when profits take a beating, executives collect millions in salaries, bonuses, stock options and other perks. In good years and bad, untold billions in interest and “servicing” fees have filled the coffers of JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Citibank and their cohorts — no concessions there!

Thus far the companies have offered the workers nothing in the way of gratitude for their sacrifices. On the contrary, the restored liquidity of the Detroit Three has only whetted their appetites for a deeper plunge in the price of labor power.

For the UAW, one of the most humiliating concessions of 2009 was the freezing of wages of all future employees, other than skilled trades, at \$14 per hour until 2015. This is only 1.25 times the federal poverty rate for a family of four. Now that the “traditional” UAW workforce has been cut to the bone, it is expected that thousands of workers will be hired at the below-union-scale wage. “That’s where the big economic gains would come, said Aaron Bragman, an analyst with research

and consulting firm IHS Global Insight in suburban Detroit.” (Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 17)

Two-tier: a menace to all labor

In 1983 a new phrase was added to the lexicon of collective bargaining: “two-tier.” That year American Airlines and two unions, the Air Line Pilots Association and the Transport Workers Union, ratified a contract allowing the company to cap wages of new hires at a rate much lower than what then-current employees made. Within three years all but two airlines — two whose overall pay scale was below average — had gotten workers to agree to the two-tier structure. By then 10 percent of all union contracts — with the next big wave occurring in the grocery industry — had this major concession.

Two-tier pay was a big win for the bosses, who for the first time in decades saw average labor costs go down. For the labor movement, however, it is a poison pill that has dragged down the overall union pay scale and has sown division among workers making unequal wages for identical work. All too often, union leaders have become the salespeople for concessions such as two-tier, advancing them as necessary to keep a company or an industry “competitive.”

For members of the UAW, who are commemorating the union’s 75th anniversary this year, the dual pay rate virus began infecting their contracts in the 1990s.

In 1998 — after a six-and-a-half-year dispute that included two long strikes, prolonged slowdown campaigns, spontaneous walkouts and numerous charges of unfair labor practices — workers at the world’s largest construction equipment manufacturer, Caterpillar, accepted a six-year contract with a permanent two-tier pay scale. Previous UAW contracts only had a “graduated” two-tier system that gave new hires top rate eventually. Twelve years later Caterpillar has become a one-tier company where attrition — the separation by retirement, death, discharge or voluntary quitting of higher paid employees — and concessions have brought everyone’s pay down to the lowest level.

The setback at Caterpillar had a domino effect. In 1999 Ford and General Motors spun off their parts divisions, creating two new but dependent companies, Visteon and Delphi. Later, with the co-operation of the UAW leadership, those companies were able to get workers to swallow two-tier. The same happened at American Axle, an earlier GM spinoff. At all three companies new hires’ pay was frozen at around \$16.50 an hour.

In 2005, after the company declared bankruptcy, Delphi boss Steve Miller

threatened to drive down the hourly rate for production workers to \$12 or lower and all but eliminate pensions and benefits — and to close more than 20 plants. Fearful for their future, the majority of the higher seniority workers took retirement buyout packages.

Will struggle ignite over high profits, low wages?

By 2007 bottom tier workers were the majority at Delphi and voted for a one-tier contract that raised their pay but eliminated the higher pay scale. Later that year UAW members at Ford, GM and Chrysler agreed to their first two-tier contract — although a sizable minority voted no. In 2008, after a hard, three-month strike, American Axle workers making the higher rate took pay cuts in the range of \$10 per hour.

Two-tier wages — which have dragged all wages down — have created what would once have been an oxymoron: low-wage autoworkers. Their numbers will increase as the Detroit Three replace workers who, uncertain of their future or unable to relocate after a plant closing, have taken incentive packages designed to get them to quit or retire.

Many of these new hires will be young and many will be workers of color and women workers. As profits rise, anger among all workers will grow as the spread of substandard wages combines with line speedups and demands for more work. If the capitalist economy shows signs of even a temporary recovery and thousands are hired, economic confidence could spawn a rebellious attitude in the plants, especially with young workers.

The UAW needs to undergo a radical change, or its numbers will continue to plummet and workers will see the union as irrelevant or unnecessary. Business unionism must go. The militant tradition of the sit-downs of the 1930s and the lengthy, valiant strikes of the following decades must be revived.

In 2007 the United Food and Commercial Workers won a contract with California grocers that raised wages for lower-paid workers and ended two-tier. Storeowners were not eager to suffer a repeat of the grocery strike of 2005.

King’s comments, however weak or misplaced, open up the possibility of a revived class struggle in auto. High on the agenda at the UAW Convention in June in Detroit ought to be this basic demand: “Equal pay for equal work — union wages for all.”

Martha Grevatt has worked 22 years for Chrysler in Twinsburg, Ohio. Her plant will close in July. E-mail mgrevatt@workers.org.

A Cuban reader responds

WW writer Martha Grevatt received the following letter from a reader in Cuba after the recent publication of Part 1 of “Two Choices for UAW.”

Dear Martha Grevatt,

My name is Ildefonso Gustavo Díaz Sandoval. I work as a teacher of English and I teach it as a foreign language in a faculty of medical sciences in Artemisa, La Habana, Cuba.

I subscribe to the Workers World newspaper and I receive it every month.

I would like you to know that I have read your article entitled “Two choices for UAW: Class struggle or suicide,” published on April 29 on page 2.

I strongly agree with you and I say that the union cannot be divided by any prejudice, any ideological position, by anything against the workers. I am sure you will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the UAW in 2011 with new victories and better achievements, in an atmosphere of solidarity ... for your cause.

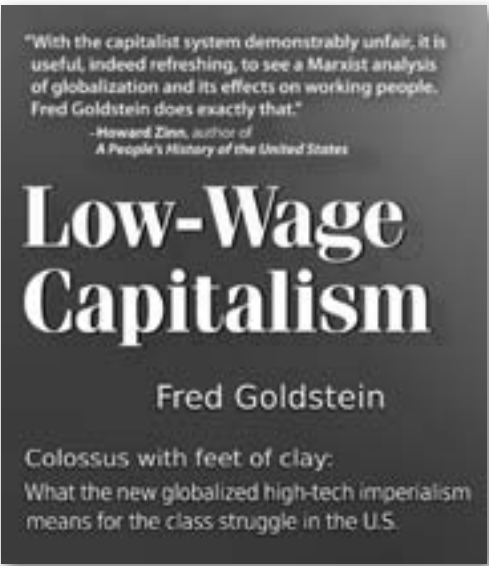
A better world is possible!

Faithfully yours,

Ildefonso

Teacher

Cuba



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Martha Grevatt

Nat’l Executive Officer, Pride At Work, AFL-CIO, UAW Local 122

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David Sole, President, UAW Local 2334, Detroit, Michigan

On the Picket Line

by Sue Davis

Twins Cities nurses vote to strike

Amid chants of “Safe patient care!” 90 percent of Twin Cities nurses voting May 19 rejected the contract offered by 14 hospitals. The nurses say the hospitals are using the economy as an excuse to make cuts that would hurt patients. If a new contract cannot be negotiated by June 1, the 12,000-plus members of the Minnesota Nurses Association, which is part of National Nurses United, will strike. The nurses elected to go out for one day to show, according to MNA President Linda Hamilton, they were “serious about standing up for patient safety” while minimizing “the impact on our patients.” If forced to strike, it would be the largest nursing walkout in U.S. history. The largest previous nursing strike also occurred in Minnesota in 1984 when more than 6,000 Twins Cities registered nurses walked out for 38 days. (AFL-CIO blog, May 20)

National Nurses Week ‘on the move’

National Nurses Week kicked off May 11 in Washington, D.C., with an informational picket by nurses at the Washington Hospital Center, whose contract expired at midnight May 10. The nurses, represented by Nurses United of the National Capital Area, are demanding better staffing levels and challenging the hospital’s efforts to roll back wages and change working conditions. Nurses in D.C. for the National Nurses United legislative conference joined the picket line before staging their “Improving the quality of care” demonstration on Capitol Hill on May 12. (Union City, online daily newsletter of the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO, May 10-12) On May 20, 1,300 RNs at the University of Chicago Medical Center voted to become the newest members of NNU, which is the largest nurses’ union in the U.S. (AFL-CIO blog, May 21)

Women’s bias suit against Wal-Mart

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco voted April 26 to affirm that class-action status be awarded to the suit brought by more than one million women employees charging Wal-Mart with gender discrimination. The suit is one of the largest class-action lawsuits in U.S. history. Rather than ‘fess up and pay up, the billion-dollar global retailer and largest U.S. employer announced that it would appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court. (Wall Street Journal, April 27)

Women win lawsuit against Novartis

On May 17 a jury decided that Novartis Pharmaceuticals will have to pay 12 former female sales representatives compensatory damages of \$3.36 million for pain, suffering and loss of employment. More than 5,600 other female sales employees can apply in coming months for similar damages, which could exceed \$200 million. Calling this “a huge victory for working women,” plaintiff Holly J. Waters testified that she was fired when she was seven months pregnant for being pregnant. The May 18 New York Times reported, “Other women testified they were subject to hostile remarks, especially concerning pregnancy, and unfairly passed over for promotion in what they described as a sexist atmosphere controlled by male district managers.”

Defend union rights in Mexico

After the San Francisco Labor Council met with a delegation from the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas to learn about their struggle to maintain their 44,000-member union after government repression was used to break their general strike, it passed a resolution on May 10 calling on all affiliated unions and community organizations to picket the Mexican Consulate on May 14 to protest this repression.

As the resolution noted, the attacks on SME “mirror similar assaults on our pay and working conditions, like forced pay cuts on city workers in San Francisco, S.F. electronic workplace raids, the S.F. building trades struggle for work, union busting at Boron, Ca., and attempts to divide us like race hatred in Arizona. ... Standing in solidarity with SME is an act of resistance to our own struggles and part of our own fightback.”

On May 20, while Mexican President Felipe Calderón was being wined and dined at the White House, union members and labor rights activists picketed the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., to condemn Calderón’s repression of labor unions. Members of the Steelworkers union singled out Los Mineros, whose members have been on strike for almost three years at the Cananea mine in northwestern Mexico over health and safety violations.

Calderón is threatening to send federal troops to take over the mine and break the strike. Demonstrators chanted, “Unions united will never be defeated!” and waved signs reading, “Hands off Los Mineros” and “Respect workers’ rights.” Manny Armenta, subdistrict director for USW District 12, told Union City, “There is no need for bloodshed and we will not stand for it.” (May 21) □

Newark, N.J.

‘Housing is a right!’



The People’s Organization for Progress, along with other community and political organizations, held a rally and march on May 22 to demand an end to evictions and foreclosures throughout New Jersey. The protest was held in the majority African-American city of Newark, which has the largest population in the state and one of the highest poverty rates in the U.S.

Speakers advocated the takeover of abandoned apartment buildings by the growing number of homeless people who are either jobless or have no livable income. Related issues such as police brutality — which is rampant in the oppressed communities — were also raised.

The protesters marched to a branch of Bank of America in downtown Newark to demand a

bailout of the people and to assert housing as a basic human right. Since September 2008, the U.S. government has forked over trillions of dollars in taxpayer money to bail out some of the world’s largest banks like BofA, Citi and other Wall Street institutions at the expense of the workers and the poor.

— **Report and photo by Monica Moorehead**

Stop police brutality against high school students

By **Caleb T. Maupin**
Cleveland

Anger exists in Cleveland against the routine brutal practices of the police department. Over 11,500 people have watched the YouTube video of cops attacking DeAsia Bronaugh and Destiny Bronaugh, two African-American high school students and sisters, as they participated in a peaceful student walkout at Collinwood High School against mass school closings and cutbacks.

The Bail Out the People Movement was able to mobilize thousands of people to send e-mails and make phone calls to local elected officials, Cleveland School District officials and the Cleveland Police Department to express outrage at the police attack and demand the charges brought against the Bronaugh sisters be dropped and that they not face school disciplinary action.

With e-mails and phone calls coming in from all across the country as well as internationally, Collinwood High School has halted the process of expelling Seth Barlekamp, leader of the student walkout. He and his mother were informed that no further disciplinary action would be taken by the school against him or any of the dozen students who walked out of school on May 13.

While this victory is important, the two young women still face criminal charges of assault on a police officer, aggravated disorderly conduct, truancy and resisting arrest.

Tina Bronaugh, mother of the two brutalized sisters, spoke with

Cleveland’s News Channel 5, while her daughters sat on either side of her, their faces bruised and scarred from the brutal police attack. She said how horrified she was by what had happened to her daughters, and how if she had treated her daughters in that way she would quickly have lost custody of them and would have been charged with child abuse.

Outcry throughout the community over this police attack on students of color continues. A community meeting was held at the Collinwood Branch Library, and it drew a number of college stu-

dents, community activists and other victims of police terror.

The protest campaign to fight the unjust charges against the young women needs your help. Please call the Cleveland Prosecutor’s Office at 216-664-4850 and demand that charges against DeAsia Bronaugh and Destiny Bronaugh be dropped and that the truancy fines against the 12 students who walked out of school in a peaceful protest be waived as well.

More actions on behalf of the Bronaugh sisters and the other youth wrongfully arrested are currently being planned. □

Workers picket CUNY Research Foundation

Dozens of protesters rallied on May 24 outside the City University of N.Y. Research Foundation headquarters in midtown Manhattan to demand that Professional Staff Congress members at the New York City Tech, LaGuardia Community College and Graduate Center Research Foundations receive a fair first contract.

More than 80 percent of R.F. workers have voted for representation by the PSC. RF-CUNY has offered salary increases of only 1.5 percent while demanding that workers immediately increase the contribution to their health insurance premium from 11 percent to 19 percent.

During the protest, PSC First Vice President Steve London and two members of the union bargaining teams went to the R.F. board of



directors meeting on the 8th floor and delivered petitions signed by 700 people to R.F. President Richard Rothbard. Facing camera in photo, LaGuardia unionist Maurice Pinzon tells union members about the delegation’s foray into the board meeting.

The PSC represents 20,000 full- and part-time faculty and other staff at the City University colleges.

— **Report and photo by John Catalinotto**

‘May Day showed revival of class struggle’

Fightback grows against Arizona’s anti-immigrant law

Following are excerpts from a talk given by Teresa Gutierrez, co-coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights and a Workers World Party secretariat member, at a May 22 WWP forum in New York City.

Imperialist plunder of natural resources and the attempt to colonize an entire nation and its people is the sum of the history between the U.S. and Mexico.

And today, not only do Mexicans and other immigrants have to seriously endanger themselves, even die to cross that border, Mexicans living on this side of the border cannot even study that history.

So many of the gains that we made in the struggle of the 1960s in particular, like that of the right to learn our history as oppressed people, are being eroded before our very eyes.

But the right to study Chicano, Black, Native American, women’s or lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgender history is not a right that was handed to us. It was a right that we won with our struggle, a right we wrested from the ruling class. And one we will not give up. Many young people sacrificed and even died for those ethnic studies.

The Binational Migration Institute at the University of Arizona’s Mexican American Studies and Research Center issued a study two years ago on the thousands of border-crossing deaths in the U.S. It showed an unprecedented increase in the number of deaths in the deserts and mountains of southern Arizona, with exposure (including heat stroke, dehydration, and hyperthermia) being the leading cause of these deaths.

The increase in deaths “is a direct consequence of the government’s ‘prevention through deterrence’ immigration-control policies that intensified in the mid-1990s.



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Workers World Party leaders Larry Hales, Teresa Gutierrez and Larry Holmes were panelists at a May 22 forum on “Fighting racism and fascism in a global capitalist crisis: A socialist and working class perspective.” Go to www.workers.org to hear the podcasted talks.

“These policies include a quintupling of border-enforcement expenditures and a militarization of the border with new barriers, fortified checkpoints, high-tech forms of surveillance and thousands of additional Border Patrol agents stationed along the U.S.-Mexico border.”

The study reports that “migrants are increasingly funneled into the most isolated and desolate terrain of the Arizona-Sonora desert border, resulting in the recovery of more and more skeletal remains. This ‘Funnel Effect,’ as the Institute terms it, occurs when traditional, less dangerous, crossing points are sealed.”

The funnel effect is an important concept to remember. It is one explanation of what is behind SB 1070 and the rise of reaction in Arizona. The U.S. government under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, as well as Barack Obama now, purposely and intentionally have “funneled” migration to one of the most dangerous and conservative areas in the country.

The fence built along this part of the border cost at least \$176 million to construct — money that could have gone to hospitals or schools. The fence includes a 76-mile reservation border as well as privately owned land along the Texas-Mexico border. It was modeled after Israel’s racist colonial apartheid wall. The Department of Homeland Security waived at least 40 environmental and cultural preservation laws in order to build it.

The fence is eagerly supported by Arizona senator, Russell Pearce — best known for his “accidental” e-mailing of neo-Nazi propaganda — and Sen. John McCain.

This funneling effort did not decrease the number of migrants crossing into the U.S.

Response to Arizona’s racist policy: resistance

The new strategy closed off major urban points of migration in Texas and California and funneled hundreds of thousands of migrants through southern Arizona’s remote and notoriously deadly deserts and mountains.

The study also raised that an exponential increase in the number of recovered bodies occurred from 1990 to 2005.

During the “pre-funnel effect” years (1990-1999), the medical examiner’s office handled, on average, the bodies of approximately 14 border crossers per year. In stark contrast, during the funnel effect years (2000-2005), on average, 160 bodies were sent to the medical examiner’s office each year.

There was a significant decrease in the number of recovered bodies of border crossers from northern Mexico and a significant increase in the number of such decedents from central and southern Mexico.

At least 78 percent of the increase in deaths along the entire Southwest border from 1990 to 2003 took place in southern Arizona.

But there is something else going on besides racism and reaction.

And that is the resistance of a huge and vital sector of our class, the resistance particularly of young people, who in this period on this struggle in defense of immigrant rights, are setting the tone and leading the way.

And resistance is the only way to look at the massive May Day demonstrations that took place this year around the country.

Once again May Day became a symbol of a sector of the working class in this country that is flexing its class muscles. No matter the form it may have taken, no matter what the demands, May Day showed a revival of the class struggle in this country.

Despite the repression, despite the attacks, workers are fighting back. This struggle has not gone away. It has not waned.

It is also a sign of things to come. May Day has been forever revived in this country. And sooner or later, more and more U.S.-born workers will embrace the significance of May Day and make it their own as well.

The immigrant movement must understand and understand this deeply, that the struggle for legalization cannot advance, much less win, unless this happens.

Until the working class — all its sectors — rises up and fights back in a general struggle against the ruling class, the right wing will continue to set the agenda.

The struggle for jobs and housing and education must become ever more fused with the immigrant struggle. The struggle for Black liberation must become ever more fused with the struggle for Latino/a liberation. □

Students support Arizona struggle



PHOTO: WWW.DOSCENAVOS.NET

Immigrant students and their supporters in Houston held a press conference and demonstration outside the federal building in solidarity with students arrested four days earlier in Arizona. Organized by FIEL, Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha, they demanded Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison support the DREAM [“Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors”] Act.

Wearing caps and gowns and carrying their college diplomas, the students protested the unfairness of earning a college degree in the U.S. but not being allowed to work. On May 17, four students held a sit-in inside the Tucson, Ariz., office of Sen. John McCain to pressure him to back the DREAM Act, which would grant permanent citizenship to undocumented workers’ children if they completed two years of college.

Escalating their tactics, the student activists in Arizona risked deportation to Mexico and Iran. Three of the Arizona students were turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement after all of them spent the night in jail.

— Gloria Rubac

‘San Patricio

MUSIC REVIEW

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

In an outstanding contribution to the music of the world’s peoples, the renowned Irish artists, The Chieftains, have produced a stunning new compact disc entitled “San Patricio.” It is a tribute and a history lesson, set to music.

The CD’s theme of solidarity is as timely today as it was more than 150 years ago when the San Patricio Battalion joined with the Mexican people to fight U.S. expansionism.

The CD features Ry Cooder and many Irish, Mexican and other artists of varying nationalities, including Lila Downs, Los Folkoristas, Los Cenzontles, Carlos Núñez, Moya Brennan, L.A. Juvenil, Chavela Vargas and Liam Neeson. The music deploys a vast array of traditional and contemporary Mexican and Irish instruments, with lyrics sung in English and Spanish and with recordings gathered in Dublin, New York City, Mexico, Los Angeles and Spain.

From rousing sessions to ballads to the “March to Battle” (Across The Rio Grande) by Banda de Gaitas del Batallón de San Patricio, the spirit of the San Patricios and their Mexican compatriots comes through. Linda Ronstadt sings “A la orilla de un palmar” in Spanish.

TUCSON

Indigenous activists occupy Border Patrol

Editor's note: The following statement was released on May 22 by the O'odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective and other Native activists after carrying out an occupation May 21 at the U.S. Border Patrol headquarters in Arizona. More information on this struggle can be found at www.oodhamsolidarity.blogspot.com.

At approximately 1 p.m. on May 21, more than a dozen people occupied the Tucson Headquarters of the U.S. Border Patrol to draw attention to impacts of border militarization in Indigenous Communities. Six people, including Alex Soto, a member of the Tohono O'odham Nation and a volunteer with the group O'odham Solidarity Across Borders, locked themselves together for up to three and a half hours. "Indigenous voices have been ignored. In our action today we say NO MORE!" said Soto.

Banners were hung, including one placed over the reception window that read, "Stop Militarization of Indigenous Lands Now," traditional songs were sung and the group chanted, "Border militarization destroys Indigenous communities!" and "No raids, no deportations! No SB 1070, no racist laws!"

Approximately 30 Border Patrol agents flooded the lobby of the headquarters and scrambled to react. Roads to the headquarters and adjacent air force base were shut down. Tucson City Police were eventually called and began preparing an extraction of the peaceful resisters.

A diverse crowd of up to 70 people quickly gathered outside the Border Patrol headquarters to support those locked down inside. Ofelia Rivas of O'odham Voices Against The Wall, an elder in support of the action stated, "It was a historical and powerful moment for people of all

colors to unite with O'odham, to stand in solidarity for human rights and to see the next generation take a stand."

At approximately 4 o'clock the peaceful resisters negotiated the conditions of their release on their terms. Their requests to consult with Tohono O'odham elders to negotiate terms of release were denied by Tucson Police. The protesters decided to unlock and were cited for two misdemeanors each of trespassing and disorderly conduct.

The resisters were released just outside the premises to join supporters where they gathered in traditional prayer and rallied against border militarization for another hour. Community members, including members of the Pasqual Yaqui, Tohono O'odham and Dine' Nations reacted emotionally when two Wackenhut Corp. buses left the Border Patrol compound filled with undocumented people. The detainees responded with returning the symbol of resistance — a raised fist.

"This is just one action of many that makes visible the invisible crimes against humanity that occur every day on the co-



PHOTO: O'ODHAM SOLIDARITY ACROSS BORDERS COLLECTIVE

Banner reads: "Stop the militarization of Indigenous lands."

lonial border," stated one of the peaceful resisters. "We commit to honoring the prayers and call for support of the people most impacted by border militarization, the Indigenous Peoples whose lands we are on and migrants who seek a better life for their families. We cannot allow government agencies, border patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement or re-

formist agendas to further their suffering. We will continue our actions of peaceful resistance for human dignity and respect for all peoples."

The action also denounced SB 1070 and HB 2281 as racist laws that are a part of an ongoing system of genocidal policies against Indigenous Peoples and migrant communities. □

Texas schoolbooks to teach racism, capitalism

Following are excerpts from a talk by Teresa Gutierrez, Workers World contributing editor and co-coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights, at a May 22 Workers World Party forum in New York City.

The Texas State Board of Education began a campaign a few months ago of proposed revisions to the Texas social stud-

ies curriculum. Discussions ranged from whether President Ronald Reagan should get more attention (yes); whether hip-hop should be included as part of lessons on culture (no); and whether Confederate president Jefferson Davis' inaugural address should be studied alongside Abraham Lincoln's (yes).

This could all result in removing men-

tion of Ted Kennedy and César Chávez in favor of new entries on the National Rifle Association and Phyllis Schlafly, an anti-gay and anti-feminist crusader. State standards will mandate that lessons include causes and key organizations of the conservative movement, including the Contract with America, the Heritage Foundation and the Moral Majority.

On May 21 the right-wing changes were approved as the State Board of Education voted 9-5 for the curriculum that will shape history books for Texas public schools. Black and Latino/a members of the board were angry and rightly so, as they said the changes "glorify white America's role in history" while avoiding the issues of racism. U.S. "imperialism" changed to "expansionism," and all references to "capitalism" have been replaced with "free enterprise," which is mentioned more than 80 times.

The partisan board has amended or watered down the teaching of the Civil Rights movement, the U.S. relationship with the United Nations and hundreds of other items. Among other things, the standards state that students must "discuss alternatives regarding long-term entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare, given the decreasing worker to retiree ratio." Don McLeroy explained that institutions like the U.N. undermine U.S. sovereignty. Among the changes, students would be required to learn about the "unintended consequences" of Title IX, affirmative action, and the Great Society.

The board proposed referring to the slave trade as the Atlantic triangular trade, but that did not prevail. Students will also now learn that the Civil War's emphasis was over states' rights, with less emphasis on slavery.

There are four million children in the Texas public school system, making it the second-largest market for textbooks in the country. As a result, changes to the Texas curriculum are likely to impact other states as well. □

CD honors Irish-Mexican solidarity

Fighting U.S. 'Manifest Destiny,' building solidarity

In the CD's liner notes, Chieftain leader Paddy Moloney tells the story of the San Patricio Battalion: "[It] is a little discussed ... footnote in the great panorama of American Westward Expansion. During the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, Captain John Riley and a small battalion of soldiers abandoned their pasts and futures in the burgeoning [U.S.] and followed their conscience ... across the Rio Grande to fight side by side with the Mexican army under the command of General Antonio López de Santa Ana. Reviled ... as traitors and deserters, they have largely been forgotten in the retelling of history.

"But to generations of Mexicans and Irish," Moloney explains, "they are remembered to this day as heroes who fought bravely against an unjust and thinly veiled war of aggression. While the San Patricios were comprised of the displaced, the downtrodden ... from many nations, runaway slaves among them, the majority were ... Irishmen recently arrived in America. Driven from their homeland after years of oppressive occupation and the ... Irish Potato Famine, pressed into military service by poverty and circumstance, they often found themselves obliged to serve under officers [in the U.S.] with the same English and Protestant leanings they had suffered under at home. Mis-

treated and maligned as unwelcome and untrustworthy and asked to fight in a war few understood, it is not so difficult to imagine their motivation."

The Irish San Patricios, who were anti-colonialist, due to British imperialism's actions in their homeland and in the Irish diaspora, identified with the Mexicans, Native Americans and former enslaved peoples of African descent who were fighting a fast-growing expansionist U.S. Solidarity had developed among many of these groupings, as they resisted the U.S. aim of expanding slavery into Mexican territory in the late 1840s.

Moloney concludes: "After distinguishing themselves for skill and bravery in many hard-fought battles, the battalion [made] their last stand at the fort of Churubusco alongside their embattled Mexican compatriots. Knowing their fate would be sealed in defeat, they fought on against the inevitable, some say captured only after their ammunition had been exhausted, refusing to surrender. In a final show of patriotic disdain, many of the surviving San Patricios were unceremoniously separated from the Mexican regulars, court-martialed for treason and made to pay the final price on the gallows. A select few were branded on both cheeks with the letter 'D' for deserter and left to their fate."

During their time together, the Mexi-

cans and San Patricios learned each other's languages, shared their cultures, and developed close bonds. Though the U.S. oppressors defeated them militarily, they could not bury their contributions. Their legacy continues through oral, cultural and other traditions. A statue in Mexico City honors the San Patricios.

Spirit of resistance today

That spirit of resistance is seen today among artists who contributed to "San Patricio." Just after the CD was released, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed into law the racist anti-immigrant SB 1070. Since then, Ronstadt, a longtime Arizona resident whose grandfather was Mexican, and many other artists are speaking out, joining marches, contributing funds and publicly opposing the racist attacks in Arizona and elsewhere. An artists' boycott of Arizona is growing.

Carrying on the San Patricios' legacy, the CD's artists are showing, through concerted action, that working-class and oppressed peoples have more in common with each other than with their oppressors and can only bring about a better world by uniting, building solidarity and fighting back.

For information on "San Patricio," which also has great Mexican and Irish dance music, go to www.thechieftains.com. □

47 years after liberation

African peoples, impelled by global economic crisis, challenge imperialism

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, **Pan-African News Wire**

This is Part 2 of an article on the status of African peoples 47 years after the declaration of Africa Liberation Day. Part 1 appeared in last week’s Workers World.

In various states throughout Africa there are challenges to imperialism and its devastating impact on national economies. Zimbabwe has over the last decade redistributed land to African people that was stolen in the initial colonial onslaught of the late 19th century.

The country’s ruling ZANU-PF party has created a national unity government with the opposition in an attempt to lessen the efforts of the West to destabilize this independent state. Nevertheless, the imperialist states have refused to lift sanctions against Zimbabwe which is still having a negative impact on the social development of the country.

Sudan in April held internationally

supervised national elections where the ruling National Congress Party won overwhelmingly in conjunction with the southern-based SPLM. A national referendum is scheduled for 2011 on the future of the southern region of the country. Despite the holding of these elections, the Western imperialists are still calling for the arrest of the president by the International Criminal Court.

PART 2 Sudanese President Omar Hussein al-Bashir has negotiated several peace agreements with the rebel groups operating in Darfur, where the imperialists have attempted to utilize a conflict that grew out of the legacy of British colonialism in order to undermine the sovereignty of the oil-producing central African state.

One of the principal areas of interference for U.S. imperialism is the Horn of Africa, where successive administrations have attempted to direct the internal affairs of the region. The flotilla of warships off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, ostensibly to fight “piracy,” are only there to rein-

force the dominance of the industrialized states over the waterways of one of the most lucrative shipping lanes in the world.

In the Caribbean, the efforts of Caricom are being undermined by the role of U.S. imperialism in the region. Nonetheless, the people of Cuba have continued along a socialist path, setting an example for underdeveloped and post-colonial states.

Cuba has not only raised the standard of living of the people on the island but has provided tremendous development and medical assistance to other fraternal nations throughout Latin America, Africa and even people from oppressed communities inside the United States. Throughout Latin America, the movement towards greater independence from U.S. imperialism is gaining strength.

In the U.S. itself the mass sentiment against racism and economic exploitation is intensifying with growing anger being directed toward the banks that have devastated the cities and the African-American and Latino/a communities in partic-

ular. Many African-American leaders are demanding the implementation of a jobs program to employ the millions who are unemployed and without housing and healthcare.

Nonetheless, the only real solution available to African people, the oppressed and all working people is the struggle for socialism as an economic and social system that would provide jobs, education, housing, healthcare, equal rights for women, youth and all people within human society. The developments of the last three years show clearly that world capitalism provides no solution for the immense majority of humanity who are suffering from increasing poverty and political repression.

Kwame Nkrumah wrote in 1963 that, “If, therefore, we are to fulfill our pledge to the people and achieve the program set out above [African unity], socialism is our only alternative. For socialism assumes the public ownership of the means of production, the land and its resources, and the use of those means in fulfillment of the people’s needs.” □

After army assaults central Bangkok

Class struggle breaks out in Thailand

By **John Catalinotto**

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva kept one promise. The military-backed Thai regime unleashed tanks and soldiers against thousands of “Red Shirts” occupying a posh business district of central Bangkok to clear the area of thousands of anti-dictatorship demonstrators. By May 20, the army had killed another 57 protesters in its offensive, more than 80 in total since March, and wounded 1,800.

Leaders of the opposition Red Shirts, also called the National United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, or UDD, surrendered to the regime on May 19 and pleaded with the demonstrators to disperse before the obviously superior firepower of the army. But thousands of the protesters defied their nominal leaders and set fire to luxury shopping malls, the stock exchange, government buildings, pro-military media centers and banks.

After tanks pushed rubber-tire barricades aside, some protesters began setting up new barricades. They fought running battles with soldiers before being finally driven out of the capital.

Some experienced observers of Thailand say they are surprised, even stunned, by the willingness of ordinary Thais to fight the way the Red Shirts did. “It has surprised everybody. It is highly disturbing,” says Richard Doner, associate professor of political science at Emory University and an expert on Southeast Asia. “Nobody would have expected this two weeks ago.” (PBS Newshour, May 19)

Few analysts agree with Prime Minister Abhisit that order had been restored as of May 20. They believe instead that the battle for Bangkok was only the first clash in a long struggle yet to unfold.

The questions that Marxist observers ask about Thailand at this point are: What is the class character of the government and of the opposition? What politi-

cal leadership do the opposing sides have? What position does U.S. imperialism take? How would a revolutionary leadership behave in a similar situation?

Class character of “democracy” movement

There is no doubt that the Abhisit regime, installed by a military coup in 2006, represents the wealthy elite of Thailand and the top officer corps of the military. It also represents the interests of imperialist investors from the U.S., the European Union, Japan — the source for 7,000 enterprises operating in Thailand — and regional capitalist powers like Taiwan and Singapore.

The UDD, too, has been tied to big capital. Most of its leaders have thrown their support behind former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a multibillionaire entrepreneur. Party leaders are from the educated and more privileged sectors. Both sides defended capitalism and private property and were willing to protect the interests of imperialist investors.

While Thaksin was prime minister, however, his government passed reforms reducing rural poverty and offering nearly free health care to the poorest urban and rural Thais.

Improvements for the poor drew popular support for Thaksin from farmers and workers, especially in the Northeast. They aroused even greater hostility among more privileged Thais. The latter worked with the top military officers to overthrow Thaksin in 2006. They mobilized against his party in the 2007 elections and, with the help of the courts, made sure it couldn’t form a government.

Frustrated by these anti-democratic maneuvers, the UDD called its rank-and-file supporters into central Bangkok in March, demanding the Abhisit government resign and call new elections. It apparently believed that mass pressure could wring concessions from the government and that the opposition could then

win the election.

The masses of urban and rural poor came out in force and with enormous determination to back the UDD’s call. Many in the end were ready to risk their lives in the struggle against the dictatorship. They were taking a role in determining their fate. According to all reports, the vast majority of the Red Shirts’ ranks were workers and farmers.

U.S. imperialism in Thailand

The U.S. has been the dominant foreign political power in Thailand since World War II. The Pentagon has been especially close to the Thai military, using Thailand as its main airbase during the war against the Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian peoples.

Washington’s silence after the mass slaughter shows that the U.S. ruling class much prefers a stable dictatorship in Thailand to an unstable situation with the masses in movement.

As with Honduras after last summer’s military coup and the rigged November election, Washington has made no complaints about the brutal Abhisit regime. Nor has there been much protest from pro-imperialist “human rights” organizations that are so vocal against Iran or socialist Cuba.

While the UDD leaders in Thailand have surrendered, the people have fought on, both in the streets and politically.

“We have been poor for hundreds of years, even thousands of years, and they are living in fancy resorts and mansions,” said Srirasa Reungrat, a woman from Chiang Rai in Thailand’s north, standing at the back of a temple in Bangkok on May 20. “They have been doing this to us for a long time.” (New York Times, May 20)

A revolutionary leadership in a situation like that would have the responsibility of standing with the masses in struggle, physically if possible, certainly politically. It would support the right of the masses

to use whatever arms they have at hand to defend themselves, their movement and their demands.

Revolutionaries would also explore the possibilities of reaching out to the rank-and-file soldiers and the junior officers of the Thai armed forces, over one million strong, who are part volunteer and part conscript. There was evidence that these ranks — many of whom come from Red Shirt strongholds — were unhappy about being used against their class sisters and brothers. Just before ordering the final assault, the army killed the one general who had gone over to the Red Shirts.

Mass armed struggle and the possible collapse of the state power could open the door to an outcome far beyond just moving from an Abhisit to a Thaksin government. It could raise the possibility of a social revolution that would change the relations between rich and poor and between Thailand and world imperialism.

Since May 20, the army has pushed most in the mass movement — those not killed or wounded or singled out for arrest — out of Bangkok. Many returned to their home areas in the North and Northeast. Some reports indicate that activists in this movement are looking for political leadership different from the UDD and Thaksin, although he remains a popular political figure for the masses.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera aired on May 22, a Thai political activist in Chiang Mai, a Red Shirt stronghold, said that many of the Red Shirt members were looking for new leadership and would participate in an underground struggle against the Abhisit regime. Pictures on the wall of the political office were of Thaksin, the late Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi and the late revolutionary communist Che Guevara.

Ending her report, the Al-Jazeera journalist said that immediately following the interview this organizer went underground. In Thailand, the struggle continues. □

University of Puerto Rico

Students resolute as strike enters second month

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

One month of striking has only encouraged the resolve of the students from the University of Puerto Rico to defend at all cost public education for the masses. Their energy and creativity seem to thrive on confronting the intransigent position of the university's Board of Trustees. Their determination has grown following the stepped-up police repression unleashed by pro-statehood Gov. Luis Fortuño.

The students are not alone: Unions, social organizations, left political parties and the population in general have taken up this struggle as their own.

And it is their own, because the drastic measures that led to the university strike result from the government's laws and decrees affecting many other areas. The government supposedly imposed them to combat the severe economic crisis in the island, but they really benefit only the business sector and the wealthy. These decrees leave thousands unemployed with no security or benefits.

This government policy follows a long-term attempt by Wall Street to transfer more wealth from the workers to the rich. An article written by journalist Jesús Dávila under the heading, "The University Becomes the Perfect Storm," recalls the UPR strike of 2005: "On that occasion," he writes, "Puerto Rico was under fire from U.S. accrediting agencies that claimed it was improper for this Caribbean country and U.S. colony since 1898 to almost entirely support higher education with public funds. In those years, a U.S. consulting firm with ties to the Defense Department was contracted under the concept of an 'industry of the univer-

sities' while the Public Accountants Association recommended that the system be dismembered and opened to privatization piece by piece." (NCM-SJ-4-30-10)

Wall Street no longer needs a U.S. agency to be directly involved, since the Fortuño administration and the Board of Trustees are doing the bankers' bidding. Many on the 13-member board directly represent the banking, real estate and construction interests, including the former vice-president of CitiBank in Puerto Rico. Their interest is definitely not quality higher education for the poor.

Their policies extend the vicious attacks on public education in the U.S. that have awakened courageous students' struggles, primarily in California but spreading to other public campuses around the country. It is the same attack against the poor, be it in the U.S. or in the colony in Puerto Rico.

UPR students' response

UPR students are redefining their resistance in the most creative way. They have erected tent cities occupying the campuses and have effectively shut down the university. They have also shown they are determined to "take the struggle to the spaces where the rich and powerful do not expect us to go." (www.prdailysun.com)

On May 22 more than 200 students, carrying banners and signs, erupted into the main shopping center in the island, the multilevel Plaza Las Americas. Through slogans chanted to the rhythm of plena music they stated their demands: "Dialogue, negotiation, education, freedom, transparency, democracy and participation." Riding up and down the escalators, they held mini rallies. At the end they had

so much popular support that the whole shopping center seemed like a massive rally.

Music students from several UPR campuses tried to go to the Capitol on May 19 to demand that the tuition waiver for music students not be eliminated — one of the general demands. Several choruses, marching bands, string orchestras, flute players and many other musical groups turned the march into a street performance after the police prevented them from reaching the legislative Capitol building.

On May 20, Fortuño was holding a \$1,000-a-plate benefit dinner at the Sheraton Hotel in San Juan. Students, unions and other supporters went there to demand that Fortuño re-establish the negotiations broken by the board. But riot police greeted the students with brutal repression.

Luisa Acevedo, head of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, was hit in the back, thrown to the floor and pepper-sprayed. Several other people were also beaten, including a student who was held down on the floor with several police on top, kicking and hitting him while using a Taser gun to apply electric shocks.

The following day, 500 people from diverse backgrounds marched to police headquarters to protest the brutal repression. That same May 21, in an unprecedented move, more than 1,000 faculty members from the 11 UPR campuses called for the dismissal of university President José de la Torre and board chair Ygri Rivera. The students also voted



to continue the strike in the face of more police violence.

These actions have forced the board back to negotiations. As of May 24, the board has only agreed to amend the Certification 98, which eliminates the tuition waivers for honor, athlete, music and other students in special categories. It still refuses to drop charges against students for participating in the strike. It also refuses to open the books, claiming that the students want a co-government just because they demand to be part of the policy decision-making. But another negotiating meeting is projected for the evening of May 24 following a daytime assembly where the Mayagüez campus students ratified the strike.

Protests to continue

The graduates from Social Studies have called for a demonstration on May 25. On May 27 the National Coordinating Committee of University Campuses (CONARU) is organizing a march in defense of education, jobs and life, supporting the students' demands, the repeal of Law 7 — which has been the source of the present conflict — and to protest the massive layoffs. The march will end in front of La Fortaleza, the governor's mansion. On May 28 there will be a workers' march to protest the hundreds of layoffs that are to take effect that day. □

'We are living in a decisive transition period'

Interview with Honduran resistance leader

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Workers World spoke on May 24 with an exiled member of the leadership of the National Popular Front of Resistance to the June 28, 2009, coup that removed the legitimate president, Manuel Zelaya, from office. Ríos, who has been living in Nicaragua for five months, is one of the 200 Hondurans currently forced into exile by political persecution, including death threats. Zelaya himself has been granted residence in the Dominican Republic.

Although many of these exiles are far from Honduras, they follow very closely the events there and participate as much as possible in resistance work.

Ríos wanted to make sure from the start that everyone knew that the Honduran government is unstable and that the coup regime has been unable to consolidate power. He pointed to the failure of the current Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo government to win international recognition, despite U.S. attempts to force recognition and after Washington re-established all U.S. aid to Honduras. Lobo came to office through fraudulent elections held under the coup dictatorship last November.

Another recent failure for Lobo was the stated refusal of the UNASUR countries to attend the Latin America-Caribbean-European Union summit held on May 18

in Madrid if Lobo was present there. The Spanish government had invited Lobo to ratify trade agreements but had to meet with him separately.

Under the Lobo administration there has been an increase of human rights violations against members of the resistance as well as a rampant and uncontrollable general violence in Honduras. Regarding the overall situation, Ríos stressed, "We are living in a decisive transition period where our destiny is being defined."

The Honduran Supreme Court on May 5 had arbitrarily suspended certain judges and public defenders from the Judges Association for Democracy in San Pedro Sula for defending members of the resistance and for their open political position rejecting the coup. These judges are now on a hunger strike that started on May 17. Since then three other judges have joined the strike in solidarity. WW asked Ríos to comment on the situation.

Those on hunger strike "have been denouncing a precarious situation of the justice system, which has been kidnapped by the same oligarchy that produced the coup d'état," Ríos said. "At the same time we have another hunger strike by trade unionists from the National University protesting the layoff of more than 180 workers. They are part of the massive layoffs that are being carried out now, something that had never occurred

in our country. It is all happening in the framework of the illegal coup."

"Since Lobo took office," Ríos said, "eight journalists have been murdered because they were against the coup, and the media outlets where they worked were also critical of the coup. Lobo is unable to guarantee anyone's life. He recently said that Zelaya could return, but that he (Lobo) could not be responsible for his safety."

"In Honduras," Ríos continued, "the one who is really governing is U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens. He is the one who in fact set up part of the current government, practically the majority, and who is openly moving around from one end of the country to the other promoting the Pepe Lobo government. On the international level a group of lobbyists is doing the same, financed by the U.S. and its State Department."

"So, here our struggle is clearly anti-imperialist. At this moment, when we talk about reclaiming Honduran institutionalism, it refers to the fact that the one who is governing us is the U.S. State Department, with Hillary Clinton's politics. Last week the chief of the U.S. Southern Command, Gen. Douglas Fraser, came to Honduras to meet with the army and Lobo. [Fraser's] presence clearly shows the direct supervision of the situation in Honduras by Southcom and the role

of Llorens since the conflict began. That is why we affirm that the U.S. presence is real and permanent and that the one who coordinates at a local level is Hugo Llorens."

Asked what he thought about the current visit of Lobo to Colombia, Ríos answered: "This is very worrisome for us because that closeness of Lobo with [Peruvian President] Alan García and [Colombian President] Álvaro Uribe and the U.S. government confirms our theory that it is a plan of the imperialists to promote their goal of winning back their power in the region. Uribe is the Latin American president most tied to constant human rights violations and war promotion, and who has recently approved seven U.S. military bases close to Venezuela, which is a flagrant aggression against the Bolivarian process and the rest of the region."

"So, Lobo's closeness to him [Uribe] is a cause of great concern. Besides, the presence in Honduras of Colombian paramilitaries has been exposed and denounced. The paramilitaries were contracted by Defense Minister Óscar Álvarez during one of his frequent visits to Colombia. So we are talking of a possible 'Colombianization' of Honduras," said Ríos.

Next: The Constitutional Assembly and the violence against peasants in the Aguan region.

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The unraveling of capitalism

Capitalism just doesn't work. A recent Pew Research Center poll illustrated this reality when the results showed that fewer and fewer people in the U.S. view capitalism in a positive light, especially among the younger generation. Consider the following facts: Workers by the tens of millions are being downsized out of their jobs or never have had a job to begin with; they cannot afford health care and nutritious food; they are losing their pensions; and they are being foreclosed and evicted out of their homes, all while global warming and pollution, as the BP oil disaster reflects, run amok.

Young people in particular are losing faith in capitalism as public high schools are being closed in alarming numbers, especially in large urban areas. College tuition is out of reach for the vast majority of poor and working-class youth.

And what are the alternatives for young people when education is not an option? The economic military draft and jail. Studies show that a growing number of U.S. states are railroading more Black and Latino/a youth to prison, especially for drug convictions, than are graduating them from state universities. In reality, a whole generation of young people is being criminalized.

And since capitalism is a worldwide system that is sustained by making profits for a small clique of multimillionaires and billionaires, it needs a well-oiled repressive apparatus to try to keep the workers and oppressed disunited and disempowered. This apparatus, also known as the state, includes the mainstream media; all branches of government including local, state and federal; the prisons, jails and courts; the Pentagon and military; and much more.

The ruling class controls these repressive institutions with bourgeois laws and funds them. It uses them as a buffer between themselves — the rich — and the masses.

The most glaring repressive institution is the police. From the first day that children go to school in the U.S., it is engrained into their psyche that the police are there to "protect and serve" the people. But in reality the police as an armed body exist to serve and defend the private property and profits of the capitalist ruling class.

Just as the U.S. military and its puppets oppress the world's people from Iraq to Afghanistan to Somalia, the police in all their forms oppress the masses at home. For immigrant workers, particularly if they are undocumented, this repression comes in the form of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and its armed border patrols carrying out raids and terror in the Southwest and elsewhere.

Millions of youth are stopped and frisked by the cops all over the country for no other reason than for being Black or Latino/a in a poor neighborhood. In New York City alone, 55 percent of the 575,000 people stopped by the police in 2009 were Black. An estimated 25 percent of the overall New York population is Black.

Aiyana Jones, a 7-year-old African-American girl, was fatally shot by Detroit cops after they threw a grenade into her home while she was sleeping with her grandmother. Two Black high school students and sisters, DeAsia and Destiny Bronaugh, were protesting against school closings in Cleveland when they were physically attacked recently by racist police and then arrested.

Ask any striking worker trying to stop a scab from crossing the picket line which side the police are on and they will nine times out of 10 answer, not theirs.

Police may have unions but workers they are not. Workers produce a product or service that is useful and necessary for the whole of society. The police serve as an armed, repressive force above the same laws that exist to keep the workers and oppressed down.

The same Pew poll showed that more and more people are viewing socialism in a less negative way. This encouraging shift in thinking within the most powerful imperialist country bodes well for forwarding the class struggle. But thinking must turn into action and organization in the radical process of replacing capitalism and its rotten class of rich parasites, root and branch, with a socialist system that will empower the workers and meet all of the needs of the people.

Only revolutionary workers' power can realize a new society that will provide jobs, housing, health care and education as rights and bring an end to police and state terror once and for all. □

S. Korea, U.S. maneuvers threaten war on DPRK

By Deirdre Griswold

It was a full-court press, concocted by the U.S. government and the rightist regime in South Korea and eagerly magnified by the corporate media.

Back on March 26 a South Korean Navy warship, the Cheonan, sank near the maritime border with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Of the 104 crew members aboard, 46 perished.

Almost immediately, the government of Lee Myung-bak in the south accused the DPRK of having torpedoed the vessel.

An "international" investigation team was set up. Basically, it was a team composed of the U.S., which occupies South Korea with nearly 30,000 troops, and the Lee regime. Britain and Australia, tight U.S. allies, were added to give it a little more cover. This group came up with the foregone conclusion that yes, the ship had been sunk by a submarine from the DPRK. Skeptical voices were raised in South Korea, but they were quickly shouted down by the media.

China later expressed skepticism that a DPRK submarine had sunk the South Korean ship, but their skepticism got little publicity here.

The DPRK denied any involvement and counter-charged that the Lee regime was trying to torpedo agreements made some years ago between the north and the south that had improved relations between the two. It also announced that it would send a team from its National Defense Council to examine the "evidence" the south claimed to have.

As an important meeting between China and the U.S. on security and economic issues drew near, the Western news media began focusing on how Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was rounding up support for U.N. sanctions on the DPRK, and would raise it vigorously in Beijing.

On May 24, the same day that the U.S.-China meeting was starting, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, himself a former South Korean foreign minister, came out in support of sanctions on the DPRK and said the results of the "international" investigation were not in dispute.

The diplomatic maneuvers were accompanied by military threats against the DPRK. The same day as Ban Ki-moon's statement, South Korea's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung-hwan, Minister of National Defense Kim Tae-young and Minister of Unification Hyun In-taek held a joint press conference in

Seoul. They announced that the South Korean government would prohibit all DPRK vessels from entering their territorial waters. They also said that they and the U.S. Navy would proceed with a massive joint "anti-submarine" exercise in the area.

Clearly, U.S. submarines that prowl the seas around Korea would not be the targets of this military move.

The Lee regime said it would also ban trade with the north and further limit travel there. It would also resume blasting anti-DPRK propaganda from high-decibel speakers near the demilitarized zone that divides Korea.

The South Korean regime also turned down the request by the DPRK's National Defense Council to let a team of investigators from the north examine the so-called evidence that supposedly justifies this dangerous escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Legacy of Korea's division

The danger of military confrontation on the Korean peninsula has existed ever since Korea was divided after World War II. The U.S. set up a puppet dictatorship in the south that was fiercely hostile to communist-led forces in the north that, fighting alongside Soviet troops, had defeated Japan's occupying force at the end of the war.

Kim Il Sung, the leader of the liberation army, was a revolutionary. He represented a social movement that encouraged the people to overthrow the landlords, merchants and petty officials who had collaborated with Japan during its period of harsh colonial rule over Korea, which lasted from 1910 to 1945.

It was different in the south, which was occupied by U.S. troops at the end of the war. There, the U.S. actually rearmed Japanese troops under its command in order to keep the revolution from spreading. It set up a government headed by Koreans willing to collaborate with foreign exploiters — be they U.S. or Japanese imperialists. The Syngman Rhee dictatorship carried out massacres of those who sympathized with the revolutionary movement to liberate all of Korea.

As the north developed toward a socialist society, the south was brought into the world capitalist economy as a U.S. vassal. Soviet troops left the north after three years, but the U.S. has never ended its occupation of the south.

From 1950 to 1953, when the U.S.



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Workers World table at May Day in Union Square.

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Four months after Haiti earthquake

Anger, protests grow along with misery

By G. Dunkel

waged a full-scale war against socialist Korea, a million Chinese volunteers came to the aid of their neighbors. Having just won their own long struggle for liberation, they fought to prevent the return of the bad old days of foreign imperialist domination.

China and Korea

Perhaps the U.S. foreign policy establishment thought this history was forgotten in China when it sent Hillary Clinton and her entourage to try to intimidate or inveigle the Chinese leaders into going along with the Washington-Seoul campaign against the DPRK. But a report in the May 25 New York Times indicates otherwise.

It says that after the U.S.-China talks concluded, the U.S. had “made little progress on winning China’s backing for international measures against North Korea over the sinking of a South Korean warship” and that “there was no immediate prospect of a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning the attack.” China, as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, would have veto power over such a resolution.

The report also admitted that the Chinese government had “expressed skepticism” about the DPRK responsibility for the sinking.

This was the first time that the U.S. media had even allowed for the possibility that the story might not be true.

This does not mean, however, that Washington and Seoul are ready to abandon either their diplomatic or military efforts against the DPRK. Their joint exercises are scheduled to go on.

In response, the DPRK has announced it is severing all ties with the south and is banning their ships and planes from the north’s air and sea space. It also accused the south of “provocative acts,” including the intrusion of dozens of warships into its territorial waters from May 14 to 24.

Workers in the U.S. need to resist the barrage of propaganda against the DPRK that is a prelude to aggressive acts against that country. They should remember how Washington orchestrated a similar scenario in preparation for the invasion of Iraq. Today those concocted stories of “weapons of mass destruction” have no weight, but the war happened anyway, with all its horrible consequences. It must not happen again.

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May is the rainy season in Haiti and the hundreds of thousands of Haitians still living in tents or under tarps have to cope with water and mud flooding their sleeping spaces. That many practice what they call “domi pandeye,” or sleeping while balancing upright, shows how serious the problem is.

Haiti survived the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake due to the self-organization and sense of community solidarity, which its people have in abundance. But social tensions in Haiti are growing ever sharper, with the possible massive devastation a hurricane could cause hanging over people like a sword of Damocles.

While popular anger has been growing against the Préval government, which has taken steps to unconstitutionally extend its mandate, the real financial and executive power in Haiti is held by the Interim Commission for the Reconstruction of Haiti, whose French initials are CIRH. This commission is chaired by former President Bill Clinton, who is the U.N.’s special envoy to Haiti, and Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive. Through this commission and its occupation troops, U.S. imperialism calls the shots in Haiti.

The CIRH seems to be spending most of its time on promoting tourism and configuring housing so that assembly industries can profit, rather than dealing with the massive problems facing the Haitian people: housing, education, health care, public services like water, electricity and sanitation, and infrastructure like roads to bring food to the cities.

Massive repairs, cleanup needed

Conditions remain threatening. A few families have managed to repair their homes in the capital. The Haitian government got 7,500 of the 45,000 people living on the Pétionville golf course to move to a remote relocation center.

The government claims that there are



Demonstrators protest against Haiti's President René Préval and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), May 25.

about 460 refugee camps in Port-au-Prince. Some NGOs, using Google map data, put the number at over 1,000.

According to Michel Charbonneau, a Quebec missionary who has lived in Haiti for 15 years, the commonly accepted estimate is that it would take 1,000 trucks working 24 hours a day seven days a week for two years to remove all the debris from Port-au-Prince. This work hasn’t yet started. Charbonneau also estimated that five of every six schools in the capital were closed. (Journal du Quebec, May 10)

Foreign governments that have pledged at least \$100 million to Haiti’s \$9.9 billion reconstruction fund have 13 votes on the commission, while Haitian officials have seven. The World Bank will manage the money, while the CIRH will approve policies, projects and budgeting. The CIRH will have the ultimate executive authority in Haiti, a 21st century version of a protectorate.

Washington sent in 22,000 troops to “provide security” after the earthquake without seeking permission from anyone. Significant forces came also from France and Canada. U.N. forces occupying Haiti for the prior six years with 11,000 troops had lost most of their command staff when the earthquake collapsed their building.

With little shelter or food and few jobs in Port-au-Prince, hundreds of thousands of people — there is no solid estimate of the number — have left to go back to family in the areas of the country untouched by the earthquake. In the southwest province of Grand’Anse, 200 miles and many hours drive from Port-au-Prince, mayors of small towns estimate that their populations have grown by at least 25 percent in the past few months. Schools are on double session.

The only doctor in an area where 70,000 people live has gone from seeing 10 to 12 people a day to more than 100. Other than some aid from Cuba and Doctors of the World, this medical center has gotten no aid. Farmers are worrying that they will have to feed their families the seeds they had saved for planting their next crop. (La Croix, May 11).

Even before the earthquake only about half the students in Port-au-Prince could find a place in public schools. The earthquake

closed the schools. In early April, the government proclaimed that elementary and secondary schools were going to be opened, even though refugees, people whose homes had been destroyed or damaged, were living in many of them or in their playgrounds.

Some of the private schools, where tuition runs over twice the average yearly income of poor people in Haiti, managed to put some replacement facilities together, but most of the public schools remained closed.

‘We want to go back to school’

High school students from both open and closed schools came together on April 26 and marched through the streets of Port-au-Prince, chanting, “We want schools, not money, not food, just schools.” Their placards read, “We want to go back to school.”

When they reached the Ministry of Education, a special unit of the Haitian National Police called the CIMO attacked the demonstration with batons and tear gas. When they started firing, the students ran away. Some were injured. (Haiti-Liberté, April 28-May 4).

Lack of food also creates big problems in the camps. Many people get money from abroad, but the price of basic necessities is up by more than 15 percent since the earthquake. UNESCO and WFO do provide vouchers for basic foods but the system is very cumbersome and time-consuming, especially for women who have to fetch the food and cook without having a kitchen.

Thousands of people demonstrated on both May 10 and May 17 demanding that Haitian President René Préval and his government resign because they have violated the constitution and are clearly attempting to set up a dictatorship. The demonstrations in Port-au-Prince were by far the largest, but other big cities also held them. The emerging Coalition of Popular Organizations — Tet Kole òganizasyon popilè in Haitian Creole — which consists of community groups, workers from the telephone company fired when it was privatized, and local committees of Fanmi Lavalas, called both demonstrations. □



'Solidarity from Panama'

Editor’s note: University of Panama professor and general secretary of the Popular Alternative Party, Olmedo Beluche, received a letter from three of his compatriots imprisoned in the U.S. after they read an article by him in Workers World entitled, “The last Yankee invasion: Dec. 20, 1989.” Below is Beluche’s response to them.

Panama, May 18

Dear Compañeros:

I’d like to take the opportunity to publish this message in the pages of Workers World in order to send a greeting of friendship and acknowledge the arrival of your ... letter, which I read with great emotion. I’m pleased that my article has been useful for your positive training program and that it has reached you

through a progressive medium and defender of the workers’ cause like Workers World newspaper.

Unfortunately, I have to let you know that I could find no programs in the Panamanian prison system similar to yours. In Panama, the condition for prisoners’ human rights is one of the worst in Latin America. At the most, some Protestant and Catholic churches do something. ...

I congratulate you and urge you to go forward [in] our efforts to create a just society, without oppression or social exploitation. ... I also congratulate Workers World for the quality of its articles, and its commitment to socialism and to reach the sectors most excluded from U.S. society.

**Solidarity from Panama,
Olmedo Beluche**

PUERTO RICO

Represión despierta solidaridad con estudiantes huelguistas

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

La huelga de los/as estudiantes en la Universidad de Puerto Rico, que cumplió cuatro semanas el 18 de mayo, se ha convertido en la principal cuestión política y de lucha de clases en la isla desde que la gerencia de la UPR intensificó sus tácticas represivas. Varios sindicatos llamaron a un paro de 24 horas para el día 18 de mayo. Muchos sindicatos y otras organizaciones se están uniendo al llamado.

Desde el principio, los sindicatos — como el sindicato de profesores universitarios, APPU — y organizaciones sociales y políticas y la comunidad en general, que considera a la UPR como un patrimonio nacional, han apoyado la huelga estudiantil. Ahora, poetras, cantantes y artistas se han unido al llamado.

Padres y madres han sido los/as más fervientes partidarios de los/as estudiantes, yendo al recinto universitario ahora que la Junta de Síndicos de la UPR ha ordenado a la policía utilizar tácticas agresivas. Vienen a demostrar afecto y apoyo, arriesgándose a que les detengan, desafiando a la policía quien les acosa. Les lanzan bolsas con alimentos a sus hijos sobre las cabezas policiales. En los vídeos se pueden ver a los padres y madres diciendo lo orgullosos/as que están de la acción de sus hijos/as.

La semana anterior parecía como si se hubiera llegado a un acuerdo tentativo. El 8 de mayo, el comité negociador estudiantil del recinto de Río Piedras se reunió con la Presidenta de la Junta Ygri Rivera para discutir varios puntos claves. Sin embargo, antes de que la tinta se secara, la administración de la UPR, citando su propia interpretación de un acuerdo vagamente escrito, dio la vuelta y suspendió las conversaciones. Los/as estudiantes habían estado a punto de convocar una reunión del cuerpo general estudiantil para ratificar el acuerdo.

Según su propia interpretación del acuerdo, la junta no hizo casi ningún cambio sustancial en su propuesta original, que había sido rechazada por los/as alumnos/as, dando lugar a la huelga.

Ningún/a estudiante había cruzado las líneas de piquete, pero aparentemente la gerencia esperaba que la “mayoría silenciosa” de los/as estudiantes rechazara la huelga.

Sin embargo, el 13 de mayo los/as estudiantes votaron abrumadoramente para continuar la huelga. Al día siguiente, la gerencia ordenó a la policía, los cadetes y los escuadrones antidisturbios que reprimieran la resistencia de los/as estudiantes. La junta y el ex director del FBI en Puerto Rico, el superintendente de la Policía José Figueroa Sancha, ordenó a estas fuerzas a que acordonaran el recinto.



PHOTO: NATALIA A. BONILLA BERRIOS/LATINALISTA.NET

No se le permitió la entrada a nadie, ni siquiera a los padres, madres y simpatizantes que llevaban comida, agua, medicinas y otras necesidades a los/as estudiantes dentro del recinto que estaban en tiendas de campaña. La policía golpeó y se llevó al padre de un estudiante que estaba llevando alimentos a su hijo.

El estudiantado de la UPR estaba protestando por los recortes draconianos de la universidad y las nuevas políticas que conducirían a la privatización de la principal universidad pública de la isla. Ellos/as quieren la derogación de la C98, una orden que elimina las exenciones de matrícula para estudiantes de honor, atletas y otros/as estudiantes en situaciones especiales, lo que perjudica a las personas más pobres de Puerto Rico. Exigieron la transparencia de las operaciones fiscales de la UPR y que la junta suspenda el aumento de la matrícula de los cursos de verano.

El 19 de abril el comité estudiantil negociador envió al Presidente de la UPR, José de la Torre una carta con una lista detallada de las propuestas que podrían evitar la crisis financiera. Después de que un paro de 48 horas fracasó en convencer a la administración de que negociase, los/as estudiantes comenzaron la huelga indefinida el 23 de abril.

La agresión policial despierta más solidaridad

Desde el comienzo del aumento en la represión a partir del 14 de mayo, muchos sindicatos y organizaciones están manteniendo una presencia de 24 horas frente a varias entradas del recinto. La UTIER, el militante sindicato de los/as trabajadores/as de la electricidad, instaló una carpa frente a uno de los portones principales y está coordinando las donaciones de alimentos y suministros.

El poeta y cantante español Joaquín Sabina hizo la huelga de los estudiantes el punto central de su concierto el 15 de mayo. Varios artistas puertorriqueños invitados al escenario por Sabina se unieron con el legendario Silverio Pérez, quien invitó a todos/as los/as artistas a presentarse la mañana siguiente frente a la UPR para desafiar a la policía llevando alimentos para los/as estudiantes.

Ese día, famosos/as artistas de Puerto Rico, atletas estudiantiles, sindicatos y otras organizaciones políticas y la población en general participaron en un piquete muy animado con consignas y canciones gritadas al ritmo de congas y amplificadas por los altavoces gigantes “tumbacocos”. Gritaban “Lucha sí, entrega no” y “Obreros y estudi-

antes, unidos y adelante”.

La HEEND, el sindicato que representa a los/as trabajadores no docentes de la UPR, inició un paro laboral el 17 de mayo cerrando efectivamente al Recinto de Ciencias Médicas (RCM) y las oficinas de la Administración Central. La marcha de la HEEND detuvo el tráfico en una de las principales avenidas durante la hora punta de la mañana. Dijeron que el paro continuará hasta que la administración universitaria se reúna con los/as estudiantes.

El RCM ha sido el único de los 11 recintos de la UPR que ha permanecido abierto. Los/as estudiantes allí realizaron una huelga de solidaridad de 24 horas la semana pasada. A pesar de que apoyan los objetivos de la huelga, los/as estudiantes del RCM son responsables de mantener el Centro Médico abierto el cual es la institución médica pública más importante en la isla para los pobres, y por eso decidieron no adherirse a una huelga indefinida.

Desde el exterior, el conocido escritor uruguayo Eduardo Galeano envió un mensaje de solidaridad a los/as estudiantes y una carta al gobernador de Puerto Rico Luis Fortuño. Los/as puertorriqueños/as desde todas las partes del mundo pueden enviar mensajes a una página de Facebook que unos/as estudiantes crearon. Mensajes desde Cuba y de otros países de América Latina han estado circulando por el Internet. El Sindicato de Conductores de Autobuses Estudiantiles de Boston envió por fax una carta a Fortuño para condenar la represión, pidiendo que las demandas de los/as estudiantes se escuche.

Las cuestiones políticas detrás de la huelga

La crisis financiera y económica que estalló en los EEUU desató un tsunami en Puerto Rico, reafirmando el viejo refrán: “Cuando EEUU tiene catarro, Puerto Rico sufre neumonía”. Como la economía de Puerto Rico está estrechamente ligada a la de EEUU, como colonia no tiene ningún recurso independiente.

Hay una crisis financiera en la isla y una crisis política en la administración actual. El 14 de mayo el Departamento del Trabajo reportó que la tasa de desempleo oficial en Puerto Rico para el mes de abril era del 16,9 por ciento. Esto es consecuencia de los despidos masivos, incluyendo el despido que Fortuño ordenó de más de 30.000 trabajadores/as en el sector público. El 15 de octubre del año pasado los sindicatos protestaron el anuncio de los despidos con una huelga nacional.

El Gobernador Fortuño, del Partido Nuevo Progresista que está a favor de

hacer de Puerto Rico un estado más de los EEUU, tiene una fuerte afiliación al Partido Republicano de Estados Unidos. Él ha impuesto la Ley Número 7, supuestamente para solucionar la grave crisis fiscal. Esta ley ordena nuevos impuestos y al final, despidos masivos. Luego, él impuso también la ley de Alianzas Público Privadas, la cual concede el control de los recursos principales de Puerto Rico a negocios privados en una ofensiva masiva de privatización, comprometiendo así los intereses de los/as trabajadores/as.

No hay ninguna institución pública que no haya sido afectada. La atención de Fortuño está enfocada principalmente en esas instituciones que se han enfrentado resueltamente a administraciones anteriores y que representan puntos de vista independientes y nacionalistas. Ejemplos incluyen el Colegio de Abogados, el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña y la UPR. Estas tres han sido históricamente centros importantes que públicamente se han opuesto a la represión y al colonialismo.

El conocido abogado puertorriqueño Salvador Tío dijo a WW/Mundo Obrero que la clase adinerada y reaccionaria de Puerto Rico ve a la UPR como un centro de “comunistas y revoltosos”, un “lugar de subversión”, y que su brutal ataque para privatizar la universidad surge de esta ideología.

Muchos/as puertorriqueños/as dicen que el gobierno tiene como objetivo la venta de unidades de la UPR al amigo de Fortuño José Méndez, dueño del Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez que es una entidad privada y técnica.

Norberto Cintrón Fiallo, presidente de la Coordinadora Caribeña y Latinoamericana, sindicalista y líder socialista, dijo a WW/Mundo Obrero que la huelga de la UPR es parte de la lucha de clases en Puerto Rico durante una época crucial e histórica en la isla, cuando el gobierno lealmente sigue las órdenes que impone Wall Street.

Karlo García, coordinador del Capítulo de Río Piedras de la Federación Universitaria Pro Independencia, hizo eco de estos sentimientos. García habló con WW/MO el 17 de mayo desde el campamento en el recinto de Río Piedras mientras limpiaba y ordenaba el lugar. Con orgullo describió las tareas diarias que hacen los/as estudiantes mientras ocupan el recinto, manteniéndolo libre de basura y en completo orden porque “ésta es nuestra universidad y queremos mantenerla limpia”.

“Estamos luchando para que la educación pública no se venda. Esta lucha ha trascendido a un nivel político; ésta es una cuestión de clase. Un sector de la burguesía con su proyecto neoliberal quiere vender la universidad, pero la clase trabajadora se niega porque entiende que la UPR es patrimonio de la clase trabajadora en Puerto Rico y no tolerará su venta caprichosa a unos pocos”.

Bajo estas condiciones, la lucha de los/as estudiantes de la UPR en todos los 11 recintos se está regando como pólvora.

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